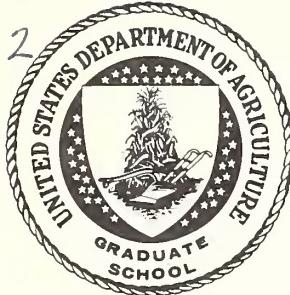


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GRADUATE SCHOOL

EDUCATION FOR A
STRONGER NATION

U. S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY

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CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS

Newsletter

July 17, 1963

Discussion of Great Books Demonstrated

"The Declaration of Independence is a smooth piece of propaganda!"



This statement started a many-sided discussion, spirited, uninhibited, friendly and frank, which brought to light some facets of the historic American document that might have surprised Messrs. John Hancock, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and the other Signers, had they been able to hear the remarks. But they weren't, of course, for this discussion took place at our monthly Faculty Luncheon, July 2, 1963.

The occasion was a "Fourth of July" celebration to provide a setting for Miss M. Clare Ruppert to demonstrate how to carry on a "Great Books" discussion. The document was chosen, Miss Ruppert stated, because of its intrinsic "meatiness" and great contemporary importance. "It has the merit of being brief and familiar, and the further merit of illustrating how classical writing is packed with thought," she added.

"It would be a great mistake to imagine it can be used to school a group in the mere technic of discussing a piece of writing," Miss Ruppert explained. "The Declaration of Independence, if seriously analyzed, will carry a discussion group into the deepest waters of political philosophy."

Through the years Miss Ruppert's classes have encompassed a wide variety of students reaching Cabinet members and their wives, clerks in stores downtown, members of staffs of Congressmen, writers, IBM employees, civil servants of all grades, and engineers, many in all these classifications with their wives, for taking the course as married couples is a frequent occurrence. Often Miss Ruppert receives a postcard from some all-but-forgotten past student

containing a personal message which states, "Here is where (so and so) (author of one of the Great Books) was born." She has been teaching the course in the Graduate School since 1947. Coordinator of Adult Services in the District of Columbia Public Library, she is chairman of our Instructional Improvement Committee in the Graduate School.

The objective of the discussion method, according to Miss Ruppert, is to provide the means of non-technical liberal education for all adults, and to this end the reading assignments go on year after year, beginning each year with the ancient and coming down to contemporary modern times.

There are no lectures, no examinations, no graduation from the Great Books, Miss Ruppert explained. But there is, in the truest sense, a faculty, and without question the greatest faculty ever assembled. The roster begins with The Bible, Homer, the Greek dramatists and philosophers, and includes Dante, Shakespeare, Tolstoi, Darwin, and Jefferson.

"As leader of the discussion group, I am not a teacher. The books are the teachers. This is basic in understanding the approach to the Great Books Program. The group leaders of these discussions are laymen who have taken the leadership training. Their function is to conduct each two hour meeting by asking questions to stimulate analysis and discussion of the issues raised by the book."

Miss Ruppert studied the Great Books method with a group of selected persons during 1943-46 under Stringfellow Barr, President of St. John's College in Annapolis, and Dr. Scott Buchanan, pioneer leaders in the Great Books program.

The following pictures illustrate our report of Miss Ruppert's discussion. They were taken by Charles H. Cunningham, Director of USDA Welfare Activities.



Nelson Fitton



FCA Governor Tootell
and
Wayne Rasmussen



Dorothy Martin
and
Jack Koteen

Two New Members of General Administration Board Appointed

The Graduate School is happy to announce the two new members of the General Administration Board appointed by Secretary Orville L. Freeman to fill vacancies that occurred at the end of the 1962-63 school year. Francis Keppel, U. S. Commissioner of Education, succeeds R. B. Tootell, Governor of the Farm Credit Administration, and Roland R. Renne, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, succeeds the former Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, Frank J. Welch.

38 New Courses Listed in Catalog for 1963-64

Our new catalog, issued this month, lists 38 new evening courses, the largest number in any one Department in Technology, with 11 subjects. The Physical Sciences and the Social Sciences have 8 new courses each, Languages and Literature 7, Mathematics and Statistics two, and Biological Sciences and Public Administration one each. The Special (day) Program Department will also offer several new courses. Copies of the new catalog and the new Special Program Bulletin are available in the Graduate School office.

Thirteen Students from Six Nations

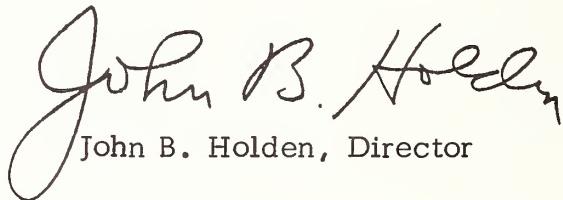
Last week we completed a successful 16-week course in Administrative Management for 13 foreign students representing six nations -- Indonesia, Thailand, Spain, Iraq, Korea, and Venezuela. In the course, which was given by the Graduate School under contract with AID, our largest delegation, consisting of five students, was from Indonesia. The students were Samuel Henry Sampelan, Robert Pieter Soemarta, Tonny S. Rasjad, Darwin Harahap, and Paiman (that is his full name). The Thai group was second largest, with three students --two women and one man--Mrs. Wandee Srisuchart, Mrs. Puangpechra Klaharn, and Praphand Yorsaengratana. The only unmarried woman in the class was from Spain--Miss Maria Saez-Parga. Two students came from Iraq, Yousif Nakshabandi and Abdul R. Al-ta'-, and one each from Korea and Venezuela, Ki Hun Chang and Luis A. Trujillo. Members of the class attended our July Faculty Luncheon and were introduced by O. Fred Peterson, Head of our International Program.

Faculty Member Honored by OAS

Henry A. Sawchuk, Chairman of the Engineering Subcommittee of our Department of Technology, wrote a paper for the recent Pan American Highway Congress that was awarded top honors among the 129 manuscripts submitted. He

received a complimentary letter from the Organization of American States and an invitation to attend the main banquet of the Congress, which was held in Washington in May. Mr. Sawchuk's paper, "Strengthening Maintenance Organization and Operations," was published by OAS in English and Spanish as Chapter III Topic 12 of the Agenda of the Congress. Mr. Sawchuk is Chief of Traffic Services in the Office of Engineering, Bureau of Public Roads.

Miss Georgie A. Keller, a recipient of the Graduate School Certified Statement of Accomplishment in Editorial Practices, had a signed article in the June issue of Soil Conservation, monthly magazine of the USDA Soil Conservation Service. Miss Keller's article describes the two-year series of courses given by the Graduate School to provide an understanding of the ecology of the Central Atlantic States. The series is given in cooperation with the Audubon Society of the Central Atlantic States, Inc. The article, entitled "Audubon Classes Travel to Conservation-Nature Areas", is illustrated with a landscape that depicts a soil and water conservation scene similar to the ones visited by the traveling students.



John B. Holden
John B. Holden, Director